

Saigon Sees No Gain in Kremlin Shifts

By John Maffre

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SAIGON, Oct. 16—South Viet-Nam, baffled over the future of its own disrupted government, was even more in the dark today about the Soviet shakeup, especially regarding its effects on North Viet-Nam's position between the Soviet Union and China.

As one government official said with tongue only partly in check, the long-range effects could only be poor. His reasoning: relations between China and the U.S.S.R. are so bad that any change could be only an improvement, and anything that eased North Viet-Nam's situation could hardly profit South Viet-Nam.

But people in the government, like officials of the U.S. Embassy here, professed to be as mystified by Moscow's maneuverings as by the Byzantine intrigues that bedevil the proposed switch of South Viet-Nam's government from military to civilian status.

Could Bring Aid

In fact, repercussions from Nikita S. Khrushchev's removal could hardly have a perceptible effect on the course of the insurgency here directed by North Viet-Nam. Regardless of the ideological split, both giant Communist leaders support "national wars of liberation."

If by some unlikely chance the Soviet Union and China were to reach a rapproch-

ement, North Viet-Nam might benefit again by increased Russian military and development aid. Such aid has been a casualty of the rift that obliged North Viet-Nam to accept Chinese "guidance" formally last year by refusing to sign the partial nuclear test-ban treaty.

Despite Ho Chi Minh's known preference for Moscow's side in the quarrel with Peking, the facts of life—a geography—impose on Hanoi and acceptance of Red China's embrace, even though it has all the tenderness of a bear hug.

However, the Soviet leadership changes occupy Saigon's attention far less than the continuing failure of the High National Council to produce a long-awaited draft charter or constitution for the expected civilian government.

And this worry was compounded late today by a cryptic communique from Premier Nguyen Khanh virtually requesting untouchable status for the armed forces in any new government setup.

Sounds Like Demand

Khanh's statement, issued after a call on the Council at Gia Long Palace, claimed Viet-Nam's fighting men "must be properly encouraged" to combat Communism.

"Therefore the civilian government to which power will be returned by the

armed forces should acknowledge the noble and vital role of the armed forces and reserve a place of honor for it in the future government," the statement said.

This, in Vietnamese context, sounded suspiciously like a demand for a war Cabinet or directorate parallel with and ungoverned by the civilian administration. It also sounded as though Khanh had himself in mind to run this body in the event he failed to become chief of the new administration.

To some here, this appeared to presage a possible return to something like the short-lived Aug. 16 suspension of civilian government. That led two weeks later to nationwide demonstrations and the collapse of Khanh's military junta.

The U.S. Embassy is concerned about this development, although spokesmen are reserving comments until more precise details of Khanh's thinking become available.

The new charter, which has been expected daily all this week, will not be forthcoming now until sometime next week, according to a Council spokesman today. This means the draft constitution, one of many duties assigned the Council last month, will be appearing much closer to the Oct. 27 deadline by which a civilian government is supposed to begin functioning.

Greater Concern Seen

Expectations are, however, that students and Buddhists are not unduly concerned about extending the deadline, and Buddhist leader Tich Tri Quang has stated that the Council should continue beyond the deadline until its task is achieved.

Of greater concern is the

prospect that the Council has in fact completed one or more versions of the charter, but that its emphasis on civilian control is not acceptable to Khanh and a large segment of other senior officers.

U.S. Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor, who saw Khanh earlier today and who has kept in touch with political officials during the week, seems to be more concerned with emergence of a stable government than in hair-splitting insistence upon civilian supremacy in the British of American tradition.